

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Monday, November 27, 1995

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State of the ARTS

Paula Lavigne

Holiday traditions redundant

Our bodies are going through turkey withdrawal. The leftover broccoli and cheese casserole is slowly molding in the fridge.

The jolly fat guy cometh.

Yep, kids and kidettes, the Christmas season lurks around the corner, but with few surprises.

At no other time in the year is there a season filled with boring traditions. It's the festive season of reruns, re-plays, redundancies and re-fried fruit-cakes.

It's not that tradition is a bad thing, but there's only so many times you can see "A Christmas Carol" and not start mouthing the words in pig latin because you're so bored.

You start writing a role for Slimer (you know, the oozy green glob from "Ghostbusters") as the Ghost of New Year's Eve to spice up the plot a bit, while you're slowly sinking into your chair with visions of sugar plums doing the tango in your head.

Then there's always the Jimmy Stewart and Bing Crosby marathons and the string of Christmas music from "Silent Night" to "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer."

Christmas dictates five staple events from which you cannot escape: "The Nutcracker," "A Christmas Carol," "Mannheim Steamroller," "The Star City Holiday Parade," and driving aimlessly around "ooo-ing and aaah-ing" at people's Christmas lights.

With my tirade of Christmas entertainment over, there is some salvation in this sleigh ride 'o' fun.

"The Nutcracker" is worth seeing. It's the same story, but the Joffrey Ballet will be performing it with Ballet Omaha. The Joffrey Ballet could even make midnight Mass rock.

And while you're in Omaha, there are other festive time-killers, including Dickens in the Old Market on Dec. 2 and Dec. 3, and the Omaha Symphony from Dec. 14 to 17.

Mannheim Steamroller has released a long-awaited new album "Christmas in the Aire," which maintains the signature sound of the Omaha-based band but is refreshingly new.

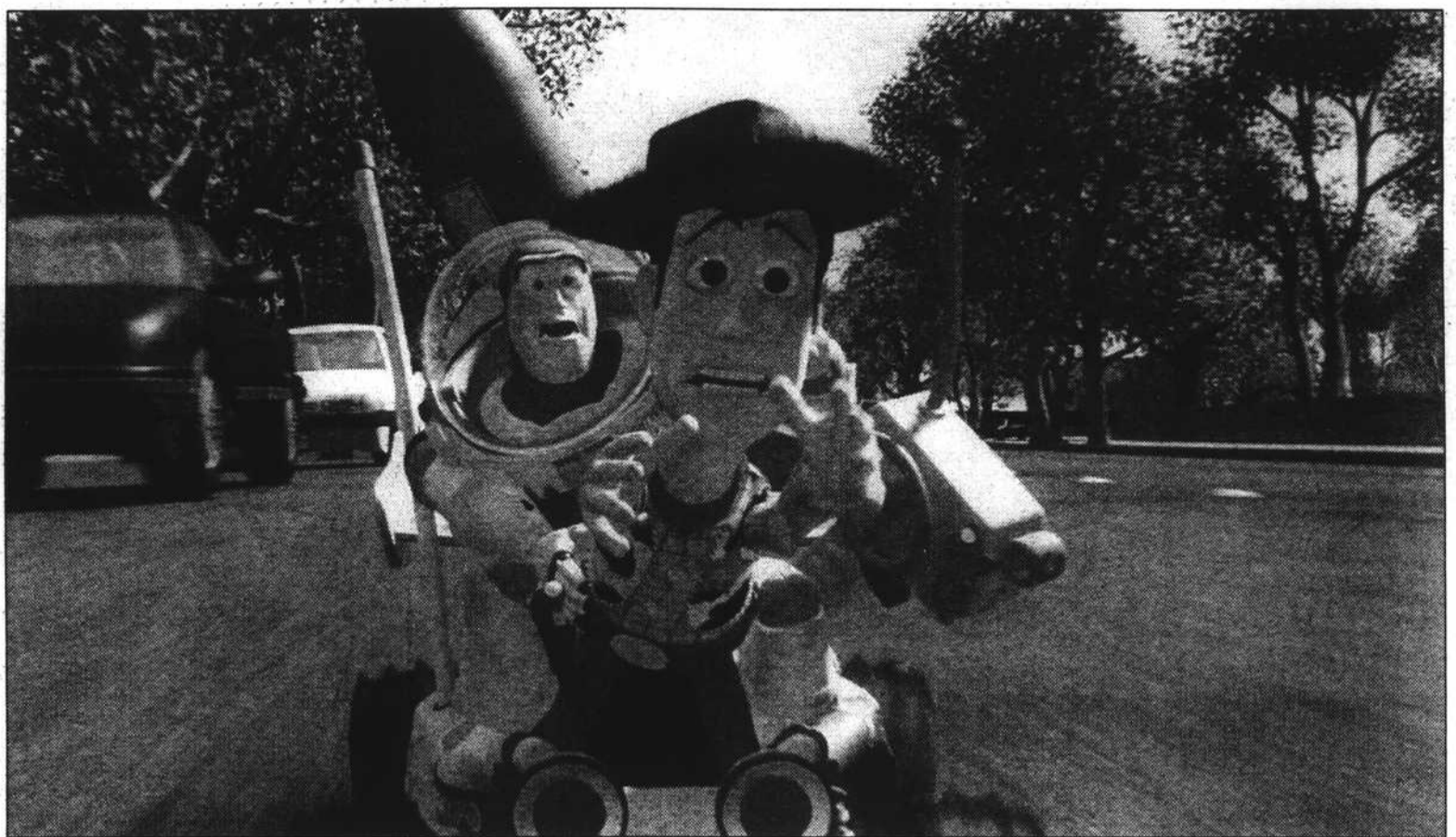
The Star City Holiday Parade always has new things, but it'll be even more fun to see how many of those jumbo balloons bite the dust going under the O Street skywalk.

But you could also stay at home and make your own Christmas fun, like seeing how long it takes for a 6-foot Scotch pine to burn to the ground. (Make sure you don't cut one down from university property, because they're said to be sprayed with "stinky fox urine.")

Making cookies can be fun if you have cookie cutters in the shape of your favorite world leaders and have a gingerbread Boris Yeltsin smacking a glob of frosting on a butter-rum Bill Clinton.

Then again, you could always watch "A Charlie Brown Christmas" with your head stuck in a bowl of chocolate covered cherries, eggnog and rum in hand, singing "O Christmas Tree" until your lungs bleed.

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Courtesy of The Walt Disney Co.

Rival Toys Woody the cowboy and Buzz Lightyear join forces in a fast-paced finale to reunite with their owner Andy in Disney's latest animated feature, "Toy Story."

'Story' a delightful haven of animated fun

By Brian Priesman

Film Critic

Wow! "Toy Story," the latest animated film from Walt Disney Pictures, is nothing short of a breakthrough.

Movie Review



Proving once again that Disney is tops in animation, the movie's characters consist of everyday toys, including Mr. Potato Head, Slinky Dog and little green army men.

"Toy Story" is the tale of Woody the cowboy, voiced wonderfully by Tom Hanks. Woody was the favorite toy of Andy, but he's just been dethroned by the new high-tech Buzz Lightyear, voiced to perfection by the hilarious Tim Allen. Problem is, Buzz doesn't know that he's a toy.

Woody's jealousy grows as all of the other toys become Buzz groupies, until Woody tries to get Buzz stuck behind a desk. Instead, Buzz is knocked out a window and Woody is forced to try to rescue him from the real world.

"Toy Story" takes computer animation to new heights. Each finished frame takes up five megabytes of storage. Multiply that by the 110,064 frames in the movie, and you get an impressively huge number.

The neat part of all this is that by watching the film, you wouldn't even know it was animated. The images on the screen seem more realistic than those in many live-action movies. The texture and colors are as vibrant as any in real life, and the sky looks like it was filmed for real.

The delightful story was accentuated by Randy Newman's wonderfully lush score, including three original songs performed by Newman himself.

A treat for all ages, Disney's "Toy Story" is an incredible story that confirms what most of us

The Facts

Film: "Toy Story"

Stars: Voices of Tom Hanks, Tim Allen, Annie Potts

Technical Director: William Reeves

Rating: G

Grade: A

Five Words: Brilliant animation in breakthrough film

already knew — our toys really do come to life when we're not around.

And if "Toy Story" has any fault at all, it's that it's over too soon.

Morissette lights up Civic

By John Fulwider

Music Critic

The cigarette smoke was thick and the crowd impatient when Alanis Morissette's band took the stage.

The sweating sell-out crowd of mostly teenagers at Omaha's Civic Auditorium Friday night pressed ever harder against the barricades in front of the stage, which had been moved back earlier to allow the bouncers plenty of room to catch crowd surfers.

(The tickets said "No crowd surfing allowed." Yeah, right.) A deafening cheer erupted when Morissette jogged to the stage, dressed in a white silk poet's shirt and black leather pants.

The crowd cheered even louder when Morissette burst immediately into "All I Really Want," the first song off her new album, "Jagged Little Pill."

Nine songs later, Morissette sang one line from the song that made her famous: "I want you to know."

Then she stopped, and the audience, in unison, sang the rest of the first verse of "You Oughta Know," otherwise known as the "I Hate My Boyfriend" song.

"What are you so angry about?" Morissette asked jokingly before finishing the song herself.

The audience's reaction to that song vividly illustrated just why Morissette is so popular. Her lyrics tell vividly how bad life can get at times, and she sings with raw, gut-level emotion.

Morissette delighted the crowd by playing all but one song from "Jagged Little Pill," plus a couple of new ones. She didn't give a name for the first new song, but the second one, "The Death of Cinderella," was a haunting ballad with chillingly morbid guitar work.

Morissette performed two encores, the first beginning with a sparkly clean cover of Radiohead's "Fake Plastic Love."

After she left the stage, her stage manager motioned from center stage for the crowd to cheer louder for a second encore. They did, and out she came again, bursting into "You Learn."

She wrapped up her hour-and-a-half set with her album's hidden 14th song, "Your House." She sang the first half a cappella, and the rest with only her lead guitarist accompanying her on acoustic guitar.

Morissette's opening band, The Rentals, deserve some recognition. Their performance was energetic, and while their musical talent may be questionable, they're a fun band to listen (and crowd surf) to. Their performance of "Friends of P," was delightful.

The entire night was a crowd-friendly experience. The bouncers politely (if a bit brusquely) caught crowd surfers as they hurtled toward the stage, then escorted them to the side of the crowd.

But Morissette's stage manager was the best. He got the crowd laughing during a horrendously long 45-minute set change when he told them to step back so the barricades could be moved.

"You can always come forward and crush your neighbor still," he said. Later, when he told the crowd to take another step back, they screamed "No!" and pressed harder against the barricades.

"I hear your love. I feel your love," he said.

Temptations satisfy fans' soul hunger

By Jeff Randall

Music Critic

The golden age of soul music may be long gone, but some of its original participants are still touring and keeping the glorious past alive. The Temptations did just that last Tuesday night at the Orpheum Theater in Omaha.

Although only one original Temptation — first/second tenor Otis Williams — is left, the group still managed to electrify the already-enthusiastic crowd.

As the opening act, the Laura Love Band held its own. Playing a seamless combination of African, Zydeco, Celtic, blues and polka sounds that Love described as "Afro/Celtic," the band got the crowd clapping on more than one occasion and brought forth cheers from the anxious, Temptations-hungry audience.

And, after a brief intermission, the wait was over. The band struck up a funk-heavy introductory instrumental and the crowd went wild. After a few minutes of further anticipation, the awaited men took the stage. They then proceeded to tear wholeheartedly into old favorite after old favorite, getting the crowd

See TEMPTATIONS on 10

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